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## **Documentation Guidelines**

The following is guidance for recording environmental public health activities, that provides timely, legal and accurate documentation of services delivered.

A public health record is a legal document of activities and services delivered. Listed below are items to be followed at all times.

1. Contents of the public health record must meet all regulatory, accrediting and professional organization laws, rules and/or guidelines. Common requirements specific to environmental public health activities include but are not limited to: filling out required forms; documentation of consultation and education provided either to an individual, agency or associated parties. Such documentation should include evaluation of or responses to services or activities.
2. Use permanent ink for all recording.
3. Date and sign and include title on all documented items. If time is of significant importance include that as well. Full signature and title must be on file in the agency.
4. Entries must be legible with no blank spaces in any area of the documentation. If space is left on a line or in a space on a form, draw a line through the space to the end of the line. For large areas not used on a form or page, use diagonal lines to mark through the area.
5. If errors are made, draw a line through the error, write error, initial and date the error. Do not attempt to erase, obliterate or “white out” the error.
6. All documentation should be factual, complete, accurate, contain observations of the professional, client quotes when applicable, interventions carried out, and response to the interventions. Do **not** give opinions, make assumptions, or enter vague, meaningless statements (e.g. the client cares about doing the work correctly). Be specific.
7. Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.
8. Write the client’s name and other identifying information on each page of the record.

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9. Use only abbreviations approved by your agency.
10. Never document another person's work or sign another co-worker's name in any portion of the record.
11. Documentation of service should occur as soon after the service has been given as possible. Note problems as they occur, resolutions used and any changes in the situation.
12. When leaving messages, document date, time, name of person taking the message and the telephone number you called. If faxing information or a message, retain a copy of the fax in the record.
13. Include in the record the status of the situation before and after you have given service.
14. Document any discussion of controversial situations and the direction given to you by a superior or expert you have consulted. Include the date and time of the discussion and your actions as a result of the discussion as well as the consequences of the directions given.
15. Record an omission as a new item in the record. Do not backdate or add to previous written documentation.
16. Record only your own observations and actions. If you receive information from another environmental public health specialist, state the source of the information.
17. Record date, time and content of all telephone client/agency related communications.
18. REMEMBER, IF YOU DON'T DOCUMENT IT, IT DID NOT OCCUR.